

March 12, 2013

Dear Ms. Pross,

Thank you for contacting me regarding radioactive waste in the West Lake landfill. I appreciate hearing from you and welcome the opportunity to respond.

As you may know, the West Lake landfill in Bridgeton, Missouri, became radiologically contaminated in 1973 when soils mixed with uranium ore processing residues were used as daily cover in the landfilling operation. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the federal agency that has been charged with monitoring this site and providing for a resolution to the issue.

The EPA has proposed several solutions for the contaminated soil. Previously, in 2008, the EPA proposed building a multi-layered cover over the radioactive waste. This project was designed to contain the contaminated soil and would have required long-term groundwater monitoring and controls to restrict access to the contained site. While other options such as soil excavation were considered, a multi-layered cover was deemed the safest solution.

After receiving a number of public comments about this approach, however, the EPA conducted several additional reviews and decided that it would continue to monitor the groundwater near the landfill and use the data generated by these tests to help determine the best course of action. In July and August, 2012, the EPA performed groundwater sampling at the landfill. In November, 2012, vertical radiation screening tests were conducted in the site monitoring wells in order to further observe radiation levels. Additional groundwater sampling and vertical radiation scans will be conducted in the first half of 2013. This information will be used to help determine if an engineered cover system should be built, or if another option such as soil excavation should be pursued.

The EPA has begun hosting public sessions to provide data results and take questions about the next steps in the remedy-selection process. Several more sessions are planned for 2013, and I would encourage you to attend and share your thoughts with the agency. For additional information on upcoming public availability sessions, please visit <http://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/region7.html>

Recently, it has also been reported that odors are being emitted from the Bridgeton Sanitary Landfill. While this landfill is located near the West Lake landfill, it is important to note that they are two different sites. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the agency responsible for the Bridgeton Sanitary portion of the landfill and has determined that these odors are being emitted by a subsurface smoldering event. This event is producing elevated temperatures below the surface of the landfill, causing waste to decompose more quickly and releasing increased levels of gases like hydrogen and carbon monoxide that can result in strong odors. DNR has tasked the facility owner, Republic Services Inc., with researching, designing and implementing actions to isolate the affected area and bring the situation under control. In the meantime, DNR will continue to monitor air quality standards.

DNR has published a web site to provide stakeholders with information on the subsurface smoldering event and online forms regarding ongoing compliance issues and activities. For this up-to-date information, please visit <http://dnr.mo.gov/env/swmp/facilities/bridgetonsanitarylandfill-dnr.htm>.

I will continue to monitor these situations and ensure that any proposal put forward to address them provides a safe, cost-effective solution for Missourians.

Again, thank you for contacting me. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the future if I can be of further assistance to you on this or any other issue.

Sincerely,

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

P.S. If you would like more information about resources that can help Missourians, or what I am doing in the Senate on your behalf, please sign up for my email newsletter at <http://mccaskill.senate.gov/>.